

References:

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Incidents of aggressive behaviour by the Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* (Linn.) in its winter quarters

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The Willow Warbler is a common Palearctic migrant to Bulawayo, Rhodesia, between October and March. It is a lively bird which has a habit of darting after other birds. During 1964 this was recorded on thirty-two occasions between 3rd October and 27th November. The attacks were not provoked; instead the Willow Warbler waited for a bird to fly off before darting after it. On only two occasions did the Willow Warbler harass the victim, each time a Canary, to the extent of causing it to stall mid-air and change direction. The Willow Warbler usually met with indifference, except on one occasion when it darted out after a Grey Tit Babbler, *Myioparus plumbeus*, only to have the latter turn on it and chase it back to whence it came.

The Willow Warbler was attracted to singing or alarmed birds. A group of birds gathered to mob an owl were darted at randomly by two Willow Warblers. A group of four Marico Flycatchers *Bradornis mariquensis* hawking insects from a tree were chased in turn by a Willow Warbler. The warbler would wait for a flycatcher to fly, dart out after it, return and wait for the next flycatcher to move. The most unusual bird chased was a Common Sandpiper, *Tringa hypoleucos*: a Willow Warbler in a bush overhanging a dam darted out twenty yards at the sandpiper as it flew past.

This behaviour appears not to be previously recorded for the Willow Warbler. The Icterine Warbler, *Hippolais icterina* was noticed to behave in a like manner on one occasion.

APPENDIX

List of species attacked by Willow Warbler.

(a) Larger birds:

- Common Sandpiper, *Tringa hypoleucos*, 1.
- Layard's Bulbul, *Pycnonotus barbatus*, 3.
- Spotted Flycatcher, *Muscicapa striata*, 2.
- Marico Flycatcher, *Bradornis mariquensis*, 1.
- Bushveld Grass Warbler, *Cisticola chiniana*, 5.
- Rufous-chested Swallow, *Hirundo semirufa*, 1.
- Plum-coloured Starling, *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*, 1.
- Yellow Bishop bird, *Euplectes capensis*, 1.
- Black-throated Canary, *Serinus atrogularis*, 4.
- Golden-breasted bunting, *Emberiza flaviventris*, 1.

(b) The same size as a Willow Warbler, or smaller:

- Grey Tit Babbler, *Myioparus plumbeus*, 1.
- Willow Warbler, *Phylloscopus trochilus*, 3.
- Grey-backed Bush Warbler, *Camaropectera brevicaudata*, 1.
- Tawny-flanked Prinia, *Prinia subflava*, 1.
- Double-collared Sunbird, *Nectarinia chalybea*, 2.
- Marico Sunbird, *Nectarinia mariquensis*, 4.

